



"Using aerobatics to create better, safer pilots for the future."

Fall 2025 Report

Nina Stewart – Program Chair

2025 Season:

As of this writing, there are 48 Collegiate competitors for the 2025 season. This season the IAC collegiate teams were our consistent three schools, University of North Dakota, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and The United States Airforce Academy. In addition to the three team competitors, I also wanted to welcome two new individual competitors, Robbin Riester from Southern Illinois University and Matthew Kerr from Texas Southern University. Our highest scoring competitor this past season was from The University of North Dakota, Forrest Scholin, who competed in Sportsman getting an overall averaged score of 85.21% from three contests! I congratulate all the collegiate competitors and the hard work that they have put into their team and strengthening their own aerobatic skills! Between juggling schoolwork, aircraft maintenance, and time to take away and practice, there are a lot of variables that go into becoming the best aerobatic competitor you can be. The biggest takeaway from this season is the friendship that all the competitors have not only with individual teammates but also with the other universities competing. The collegiate program is not just a way for a university to show off a winning trophy; it allows the students to become a part of a lifelong family that sticks together for eternity. It teaches each student the value of hard work, being humble, and with practice comes great reward. In the end, my hopes and dreams are to further strengthen the collegiate program by reaching more students and universities who can also experience the comradery of being a part of aerobatics.

New Oshkosh Adventures:

The IAC Collegiate Committee was excited to introduce and plan IAC Collegiate Camping back in July at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh. This year we were able to get 23 collegiate members together on one big campsite! Of the 23 campers, 15 from Metropolitan State University of Denver, 3 from University of North Dakota, and 5 collegiate alumni. In the upcoming years we plan to continue this new tradition to bring together current, past, and future aerobatic collegiate competitors. Next year we already have a couple USAFA students who are also interested, which is an amazing opportunity for the students to become friends and mingle outside of our annual national competition.

Throughout the week, we had students volunteering at the IAC pavilion giving a helping hand as well as discussing the ins and outs of competition aerobatics with fellow aviators interested in learning more. As the collegiate program chair, it makes me happy seeing students lend a helping hand. On Wednesday, we also presented our annual collegiate forum, where I invited the United States AirForce Academy, C1C Daniel Russell and C1C Brennan Hughes to give more information on flying collegiate aerobatics in a non-powered aircraft. The goal of this presentation was to entice new schools to consider gliders verses powered aircraft but also spread the word about collegiate aerobatics all together. At the end of the presentation, we had two new universities express interest, Southwestern Illinois University and Kansas State Manhattan. More information to follow on the progress of the two schools.

There is some tweaking that is needed for the future of collegiate camping, including getting a set list of students who plan to join in on collegiate camping prior to the opening date to submit for a campsite. This will allow us to hold a campsite closer to the entrance gates of Oshkosh. Second off, possibly purchasing a tent or a canopy for when it rains

and so students can escape the direct sun when at the campsite. Overall, I do believe that having a collegiate campsite brings the students together and allows long term friendships to build outside of regular competition.

Social Media Presence:

The IAC Collegiate Facebook Page continues to be an active place for members to view pertinent information. The page now has interest from individuals in all parts of the globe and has a total of 1,069 followers from last reported as of this writing. The page currently has 1,006 likes which shows that not only do the students who are a part of a team or previous team follow and like, the whole community does! All the teams give thanks to Jackson Halsmer and Taylor Mershon, who put their time and effort into the IAC Collegiate page. Jackson and Taylor's sharing and posting on the Collegiate page, helps to drive interest and traffic to our page. A big thanks to the two of them for their work on this front. In addition to Facebook, the collegiate teams are posting more of their experiences and successes through dedicated pages, which are then shared on the Collegiate Facebook page. To share the successes of each individual team, I wanted to also touch how many people the combined teams' socials reach. As of today, all three teams have a combined total of 5,931 followers. I mention this because each account reaches a different set of incoming college students. The teams keeping up with their socials broaden the reach of informing students about collegiate aerobatics. Broadening the social media presence will hopefully reach more universities looking to start an aerobatic team and give more information to students who are looking to create a team on their own!

Future of the Program:

This summer a couple of different schools have started forming and expressing interest in creating a collegiate aerobatic team. Those schools include Southwestern Illinois University and Kansas State Manhattan. Both universities have been paired with a mentor and a possible coach from the IAC. In addition to the two new universities, we also have three universities who are still in the works to create their collegiate team including, Minnesota State University Mankato, LeTourneau University, and University of Maine at Augusta. Currently, all three upcoming teams have been paired with coaches, joined judges' schools nearest them, and Maine and Mankato are currently still looking for an aerobatic aircraft to best fit the school. Each university has a different personality that can bring diversity amongst the collegiate competition.

To hopefully also get more females interested in flying aerobatics, I was able to get a group of amazing female aerobatic pilots including Dagmar Kress, Brittnee Lincoln, Patty Wagstaff, and myself approved to be panelist for the 2026 Women in Aviation Conference. Peggy Riedinger will be our wonderful moderator, where we will discuss and answer all questions regarding competing at IAC sanctioned competitions, volunteering, worlds teams, airshows, and collegiate aerobatics. I hope this panel will create buzz amongst all the pilots and non-pilots interested in learning more about all aspects of aerobatics!

My main goal in the next couple of years is to spread the countless opportunities that come with creating a collegiate university. Aside from growing the collegiate program, I plan to reach out to more universities by speaking at different conferences including the WAI conference in 2026, physically approaching each individual school so they can associate a face to a name, growing the social media presence the collegiate program has, finish up a couple very cool collegiate merch items and be more involved in each collegiate team. I am beyond excited to see the growth the collegiate program has to offer.

Respectfully Submitted –

Nina Stewart

Collegiate Program Chair